



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

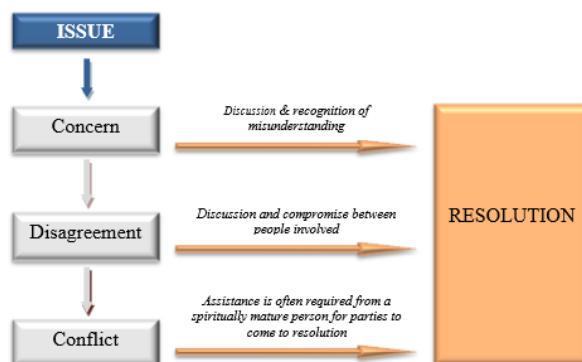
**PREAMBLE** Who this policy applies to? Everyone involved in the Capstone College community and the Poatina community.

## Aim:

- To provide a harmonious, positive and productive school environment.
- To resolve grievances fairly, efficiently and promptly.
- To keep the lines of communication open and honest at all times.
- To be aware of, and act upon indications of dissatisfaction or grievance no matter how received.

## Summary

1.1 In every community from time to time people may have concerns about how an issue is being addressed. Upon being raised, these concerns may be found to be misunderstandings and be easily resolved, or they may become a point of disagreement between the people involved. Where a disagreement is not comfortably resolved, it may at times become a point of conflict, where assistance from another person may be required in order to help bring about resolution.



1.2 The manner in which concerns, disagreements and conflicts are managed can mean the difference between harmony and tension in a community. This policy sets out for parents, students, employees and others involved within the Capstone College community, the way to deal with any concerns, disagreements and conflicts that may arise, to promote their resolution by measures based on consultation and co-operation consistent with biblical principles and practices

1.3 Capstone College is situated in Poatina Village, which is an intentional community. Furthermore, Capstone College is set up with a very co-operative learning and mentoring model that involves the whole community. This includes sharing spaces and resources and inviting the community into the learning of Capstone students. As a result of this close working relationship there will be a range of tensions, issues, and conflicts that would indicate that this policy has a real



application to the village and community of Poatina as they relate to the students and staff of Capstone College.

#### Related Policies

##### 2.1

- a) Fusion Code of Conduct
- b) Capstone College WHS Policy
- c) Capstone Child Protection Policy
- e) Capstone Behaviour Response Policy
- d) Bullying and Harassment Policy

### Guiding Principles

3.1 As a Christian community, mindful that we bear witness for God in this world, we strive to maintain an environment of unity in Christ, and we acknowledge that in the Scriptures we each are urged to –

*...live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)*

As a community we therefore strive to maintain unity and the bond of peace through open communication and respect for one another.

3.2 We recognise that unity does not mean conformity. As such, we embrace the opportunity that productive disagreement can provide and welcome and value diversity of opinion. While able to cause tensions, differences need not be threatening. They can be God's way of enriching our community.

3.3 Conflict generally will involve both disagreements over a substantive issue and the fracturing of a relationship. We recognise that real resolution involves the preservation or restoration of the relationship as well as working through the substantive issues of the disagreement. We commit to working to achieve true and complete reconciliation in resolving concerns, disagreements and conflicts within the community.

3.4 We recognise that while not all members of the Capstone College community share the same Christian belief, the principles that guide our thinking and actions in relation to this Policy have strength and value for all. In Christ we maintain a commitment to each other, especially in times of failure and disharmony. We recognise not only that staff, parents and students have shortcomings, but also that sin requires repentance and correction:

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).*



## POLICY

### Other Policies and Procedures

4.1 Where an issue involves Child Protection or another area covered by specific legislation it will be referred immediately to the relevant external agency. This may preclude application of this Policy for a time.

4.2 In all cases, policies and procedures of Fusion Australia and Capstone College addressing the particular issue shall be followed. This policy is designed to complement, not override, the proper process in relation to such issues.

### Fostering an environment of peace

5.1 Any person involved in the Capstone College community has the right to raise a concern and have it responded to promptly, fairly and without fear of repercussion.

5.2 Information regarding the process for making enquiries, or raising concerns will be made available to all members of the Capstone College community. Parents and caregivers will have the relevant Guidelines for Resolving Concerns and Complaints made available to them through the College and on the Capstone College website.

5.3 Members of the Capstone College community have a responsibility to raise their concerns at the earliest possible time. Generally, the greatest success in resolving issues is where they are addressed as soon as they arise.

5.4 Where an issue is raised, everyone involved is expected to treat one another as they would wish to be treated, and speak to one another with respect and expectation of understanding and resolution. An essential part of this process includes acting discreetly and maintaining confidentiality at all times.

5.5 Most issues will be able to be resolved informally.

5.6 Where the issue raised is not able to be immediately resolved and people are in disagreement, they should work to deal with the issue appropriately and promptly so that discord does not have the opportunity to fester.

5.7 Where a disagreement cannot be resolved in private, resolution will be sought by all involved in a timely, appropriate and satisfactory manner in accordance with this Policy.

5.8 Every person involved in a disagreement has both the right to confidentiality, and the responsibility to maintain confidentiality. Where it is deemed appropriate to inform other people of the disagreement, every person involved will be informed of this and the reasons for involving another person.

5.9 An individual Fusion Board or Capstone College Governance Group member must never be a channel for particular disagreements. If a parent or staff member approaches any Fusion Board or Capstone College Governance Group member in circumstances where application of this Policy would be appropriate, the Fusion Board or Capstone College Governance Group member must



always insist that the person involved follow the proper procedure. The first step will be to meet directly with the person with whom they have an issue.

5.10 Where a student has a concern that would be appropriately dealt with under this Policy they will be required to inform and involve their parent/caregiver in the process unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances. It is expected that in most instances it will be appropriate to involve their parent/caregiver. Where this is not possible the school will ensure that the student has a suitable support person to guide them.

5.11 At any given stage of the Conflict Resolution Policy either and any party has the right to seek mediation

5.12 Vexatious, trivial or previously finalised issues will not be pursued.

5.13 At any given stage of the Conflict Resolution Policy either and any party has the right to seek ultimate recourse to resolution through the Legal processes.

5.14 **This Policy and the Grievance Process Chart** must be made available on our College website.

[www.capstone.tas.edu.au](http://www.capstone.tas.edu.au)

#### PROCEDURE:

By way of definition: 'Line Manager' refers to the direct supervisor of the person involved. 'Principal' refers to the Head of the College or functional entity.

#### **Process for managing a Disagreement or Conflict**

7.1 The Bible provides us with great wisdom for dealing with disagreement. It commands and challenges us to bring honour and glory to God through all our interactions, during times of peace or conflict with one another. When people are in disagreement within our community we strongly encourage them to be guided in their one-to-one interaction by the peace-making principles, found throughout the Bible and particularly in Matthew 18, in order to resolve the substantive and relational issues at the heart of the disagreement.

7.2 If a disagreement arises between a staff member; a parent/caregiver/ guardian; a student; or a community member the people involved must first meet together to clearly and respectfully discuss the issues involved and attempt to resolve the matter.

7.3 Most issues are able to be resolved at this one-to-one level, with forgiveness and restoration being the normal conclusion.

7.4 Where resolution is not achieved at this one-to-one level, the Bible provides a clear process for continuing to bring glory to God through our interactions, even in times of disagreement. Under the Matthew 18 biblical principal, where the people involved in a disagreement fail to reach a resolution in a timely manner, they should request a person with pastoral responsibility for them to assist them to come to a resolution and restoration of their relationship.

7.5 Within the context of a school or functional entity in the Fusion Australia organisation, this will generally mean referring the matter to the relevant Line Manager, Principal or Fusion executive to facilitate further discussion between the parties involved.



7.5 While this can be an ongoing, lengthy and potentially frustrating process at times, it is the best possible way to bring about actual resolution of both the relational and substantive issues between the people involved. Therefore, where those involved remain willing to participate in this process, Fusion Australia will support their efforts in whatever manner may be appropriate and required. This may include bringing in outside resources (for example a Peacewise facilitator) to assist the people involved in bringing about resolution.

### **Process for managing Formal Complaint Proceedings**

8.1 It may happen that:

- a) after sustained effort a resolution is still not reached through following the steps outlined above;
- or
- b) there is unwillingness by a party to engage in the process outlined above.

In such circumstances Formal Complaint Proceedings will need to take place in order to bring about some form of resolution regarding at least the substantive issues of the disagreement or conflict.

8.2 In order to initiate the Formal Complaint Proceedings any party to the issue (or the facilitator) may make a written complaint addressed to the Principal. This escalation should not happen while there is still the chance for resolution to be achieved through continued discussion, because it limits the possibility to resolve the relational difficulties that are often central in a conflict.

8.3 The complaint must be written and contain sufficient and specific detail of the basis of the disagreement or conflict, whilst having regard for matters of confidentiality and competing duties of care.

8.4 On receiving a written complaint, the Principal is responsible for undertaking Formal Complaint Proceedings, with the intent to resolve the substantive issues of the disagreement or conflict.

8.5 Where a disagreement or conflict involves the Principal the matter should be referred in writing directly to the Executive Team Leader (CEO) Fusion Australia.

8.6 Capstone College and Fusion Australia recognises the importance of dealing promptly with issues as they arise, therefore a person can generally expect acknowledgement of their complaint within two to three working days.

8.7 At the time the complaint is acknowledged a timeframe for the Formal Complaint Proceedings will be discussed and agreed to.

8.8 When undertaking Formal Complaint Proceedings, the Principal will ensure that all relevant parties:

- a) are informed in writing of the complaint;
- b) have the opportunity to place their version on the record; and
- c) are informed that they have the opportunity to bring along a support person to a meeting if they would like to.

8.9 The Principal will assist the parties to attempt to reach a resolution, personally or through a delegate, by facilitating a meeting and mediating discussion.



8.10 Procedural fairness must be exercised in any Formal Complaint Proceedings. This ensures that all the parties involved will receive a fair hearing and any final decision is without bias. The principles of procedural fairness are as follows:

- a) The person considering the issue will act impartially;
- b) Anyone involved in the matter has the right to be heard fully;
- c) Anyone involved has the right to have a support person present;
- d) All relevant information will be taken into account;
- e) Where a conflict of interest arises or is perceived to arise, a mutually acceptable independent person may be brought in.

8.11 Accurate and appropriate notes of meetings will be kept with due regard to the confidentiality of the people involved.

8.12 Subsequent to these proceedings, the Principal may initiate appropriate action within the school community where agreed by the parties as part of any resolution to the disagreement, conflict or complaint.

8.13 The Principal will maintain records of the Formal Complaint Proceedings and the outcome. These will include any statements made by the parties involved. These records will be kept and used in accordance with the conditions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act (1988).

8.14 If a resolution has not been reached within the initially agreed timeframe (or extended time as mutually agreed), either of the parties involved may request the matter be referred, with full details, to the Tasmanian State Co-ordinator of Fusion (TSCF), or if the matter involves the Principal the ETL (CEO) of Fusion Australia.

8.15 The Tasmanian State Co-ordinator of Fusion or CEO will make a decision regarding the substantive issues with reference to all the written material provided and may make further enquiry or meet with the people involved if the TSCF or CEO deems it appropriate.

8.16 The TSCF or CEO will inform each party of the decision.

8.17 Any request for review of the process and outcome of this decision may be addressed through the CEO to the Fusion Australia Board. The Board may make recommendations as they see fit (including, but not limited to, the appointing of an external mediator).

8.18 All parties to the Formal Complaint Proceedings will be notified of the findings of the Board review.

8.19 At the end of any conflict resolution process, actions taken will be evaluated and procedures reviewed. This evaluation and review will be initiated by the facilitator at the level of resolution (relevant line manager; School Principal, TSCF, Fusion Australia CEO or Board appointed external mediator).

### **See Grievance Process Chart (Also Available on our website)**

#### **Sources informing this policy**

NT Christians Schools Conflict Resolution Policy 2013 – Use with permission

*Capstone College would like to thank NT Christian Schools for their generous support and use of their Policies.*



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

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Peacewise - Peacemaking Principles ([www.peacewise.org.au](http://www.peacewise.org.au))

*Capstone College is committed to achieving and maintaining workable solutions for our school. We may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation.*